THE WELLCOME RESEARCH LABORATORIES

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Dear Professor Lederberg,

So far as I am aware, there is no work on the genetic mechanism by which anthrax strains lose virulence. The special case of capsular loss appears to go in one step, but capsulated strains of all grades of virulence can be obtained. I agree that a genetic analysis of B. anthracis (in this respect) should be far from hopeless; in fact, it is probably one of the easiest pathogens to handle, because of the predictability of the animal response and the ease with which infection can be diagnosed.

It was difficult to follow exactly what Brown did, because of some ambiguity in the setting out of the experimental procedure, but I wrote some while ago asking for the motile strains. I can test them biochemically, but have had to make arrangements with another Institute for pathogenicity tests. It is out of the question for us to work on a reasonably large scale with virulent anthrax because of the hazards to other operations carried out here. I am afraid that this type of investigation will have to wait until some laboratory primarily interested in anthrax has a worker interested in the subject and competent to tackle it.

I shall let you know our findings with Brown's motile strains.

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

M. Sterne

(M. Sterne)

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